

MINDFUL HIKING



Mindful hiking strengthens your five senses (sight, sound, smell, touch and taste) and increases your presence, receptiveness and awareness of your surroundings. It also awakens curiosity and playfulness.

Health benefits: Can lead to increased body awareness, calmness, and presence. **Where:** A hiking trail, park, or garden. **Duration:** 30-60 minutes.

Preparation: Decide where and for how long you will hike. Follow preferably a marked hiking trail so that you can focus entirely on your experience and your senses. Feel free to bring a blanket or a seat pad, and something to eat and drink if you wish to take a coffee break in nature. Turn off your cell phone and other electronic devices so that you can be completely undisturbed. Feel free to hike with others but focus on your own experience and avoid talking to each other during the hike.

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THIS IS HOW YOU DO IT:

1. Sight. Start observing what you see around you with curiosity. Let your vision guide you as you walk and notice what you discover. Look down at the ground, up to the sky and around you to get different perspectives. Maybe you glimpse something far away or go really close to see details that are not clear in the distance. Observe animals and nests from a distance and realize that you are in the middle of their home.

2. Sound: Now shift your focus to listening. Start listening to the sounds around you as you walk. Can you hear the animals that live here? The wind and the water? The sound when you walk? Stop for a moment and close your eyes to see if the sounds become even clearer. Let yourself become one with the sounds, see how they affect your body and which emotions they evoke within you.

3. Smell: Explore your sense of smell by taking a few deep breaths through your nose. Begin to focus on the scents in your surroundings. Can you smell any specific smells while hiking? Feel free to go closer to trees, flowers, mushrooms or other vegetation to feel what they smell like.

4. Touch: Now start to feel your surroundings. Carefully and lovingly touch everything from rocks, trees and grass to moss, leaves, berries and flowers. Avoid picking or taking something with you and instead see if you can appreciate and admire the wonders of nature right here and now.

5. Taste: Pay attention to whether there is anything in your surroundings that can be tasted (which you are sure is harmless to your body). For example, taste different types of edible leaves, a blade of grass or wild strawberries, berries and nuts that you recognize and know how to pick. How do they taste? Are they sweet, sour, salty or bitter? Dry or wet? Hard or soft? You can finish up the hike by taking a coffee break with the refreshments that you brought along.

Tips: Feel free to go on a mindful hike with your child or dog to see life from a different perspective. What do they find interesting? What do they see, hear, smell, feel and taste?

